The Downward Spiral

Editor-in-Chief Syed Ayaz Badshah
TRUTH The LETTERS
Statesman
The largest circulated newspaper of the region

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Published: June 8, 2014

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For the last couple of months or so, Pakistan's TV channels have been firing the cannons of eloquence and self-contrived premises against each other and government institutions, to improve ratings.

It is firmly believed though, even, rating orientation among the media channels is a progressive activity, TV ratings help advertisers to post more and more of their commercials seeing the overwhelming response to the shows with audiences glued to the TV sets. But when there is a mushroom growth of TV channels, compromise on quality can have an adverse effect on the ratings as well. So it cuts both ways.

Pakistani electronic media's battle started off with a vicious gun attack on 19th April, 2014 on anchorperson Hamid Mir, seems to have changed everything, setting off a divisive media war in which the truth itself has become bitterly contested.

The intriguing questions behind this polarisation among Pakistani media are many and since many days, different interpretations and analogies have been drawn by intellectuals and writers for the role of the media. Beyond doubt, media are a two sword agent, once the opinion of the masses goes down about its role; it seems at times a daunting task to win back the audiences. Unfortunately, the Pakistani electronic media keep on brandishing the so called flag of the national interest, without any restraint, and continue running like unharnessed horses to win the incontrovertible race of the conglomerations. The media tycoons are alarmed, criticised and warned intermittently by the patriots to work within certain limits, keeping the national interest and the national will at the centre of their work ethics. The media infighting can prove to be a silver lining journey and in that free journalism feels shaky and can be choked at the utmost scenario. In any case, continuation of free expression needs not to be dumped. Contemporaneously, it also seems, abstract or foreign powers are trying to manipulate our institutions and especially the concerned electronic media, fulfilling their evil purposes. For instance, the neighbouring media left no stone unturned in fuelling hatred against the ISI to their own political advantages. The way the Indian print and electronic media embellished the hoo-ha of a recent incident of Hamid Mir openly indicates the acumen of their exploitation to achieve their pernicious aims.

Despite criticism, I still believe that the electronic media's pivotal role in reforming and rebuilding of the society cannot be denied. Its gigantic role in the modern age cannot be overlooked. The Pakistani media's healthy role in exposing corruption and raising voices against objectionable and obnoxious matters, no doubt, augments their credibility. It is the apt time for all the media channels to hone and whet the appetite of nationhood and sovereignty. The whole nation is ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with the electronic media; they only have to win back their lost earned reputation.

Battling and schism among the media itself will only aggravate the tempestuousness among various institutions and the state. PEMRA's code of conduct needs to be reinvigorated and exercised in an

unbiased and affective manner to stop the media's current rift and that seems to be the only way for a cohesive media's relationship.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistani democracy is too young to be maligned. It is still going through a learning phase and in whatever distorted shape it is, still needs to be sustained and supported.

In the same way, the Pakistani electronic media are in a nascent stage and going through the phase of transition, and instead of baby steps, which should have been taken towards maturity, the monster maniac strides on. So part of the electronic media faces a backlash.

Let's not be like "wanton boys" who were used and abused, sporadically, at the hands of those who have malicious wands. It seems that the voodoo spells have been spinning the media into a whirlpool quite effectively up till now. The gist of the matter is that the media, the judiciary, the government, the ISI and the army—all need to build a wall of nationhood with concrete blocks and thwart the exploiters from realizing their nefarious goals. While being in the midst of this furore, it is the time for the media to be the speakers of truth and the whole nation is looking with beseeching eyes that the truth shall be adhered now before it gets too late.